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ABSTRACT

The new realism of using books to offer solutions to problems or present solutions that could lessen a person's inner turmoil and break down attitudinal barriers to learning was coined "bibliotherapy" by G. O. Ireland in 1930. Each year the International Reading Association publishes an annotated collection of contemporary literature in its Teachers' Choices, Children's Choices, and Young Adults' Choices lists. Many of these books are related to bibliotherapy. Other resources for bibliotherapeutic literature are the Caldecott award-winning books and the Newbery award winners. There is a real need to show students that literature can help them resolve crises they face in constructive ways. Minimal professional development for using a bibliotherapeutic approach is required--collaboration with the librarian will ensure awareness of and sensitivity to literature that contains sexual abuse, strong language, or sex. Strategies that can be used successfully in the classroom are: (1) vocabulary pullout; (2) double entry journals; (3) sociograms; (4) graphic organizers; and (5) cause/effect relationships. (NKA)

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The ills of society are relegated to the school systems to resolve. When crime increases, character education programs are mandated for implementation in schools. When the economy cannot sustain a trained workforce, the school system is targeted. When student achievement gains fall, the credibility of the public schools are questioned. Schools mirror societal concerns and are in a constant search to make adjustments. These cultural concerns are revealed in a society's literature, its art, its history, and its people. The changes in family structure, in family values, in economics, and in technology require different approaches to accommodate these different needs. Those societal changes and needs are clearly reflected in the shift in literature from the traditional fairy tale to real-life situations (Ouzts, 1991). Many concepts addressed in contemporary literature reflect issues related as adoption, AIDS, alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, blindness, day care, divorce, Downs Syndrome, latchkey children, and even nuclear war. The birth of this new realism in young adult literature has been traced to the year 1967 (Nilsen and Donelson, 1993).

Teacher training programs have not kept pace with societal changes and have not equipped graduates to handle the myriad of issues that students bring to the classroom, however, teachers are caring and are becoming more knowledgeable about how to help their students sensitize themselves to others through books. This new realism of using

books to offer solutions to problems or present solutions that could lessen a person's inner turmoil and breakdown attitudinal barriers to learning was coined bibliotheraphy by G. O. Ireland in 1930 (Ouzts, 1991). By vicariously sharing the experiences of others who wrestled with similar issues, students can seek resolution.

Each year The International Reading Association publishes an annotated collection of contemporary literature in its Teachers' Choices, Children's Choices, and Young Adults' Choices. Ouzts and Brown (2000) ranked the Teachers', Children's Choices, and Young Adults' Choices from 1989 – 1999 according to the bibliotherapeutic value and the specific concepts and issues addressed by titles. Of the 341 books chosen as Teachers' Choices, 108 are related to bibliotheraphy; 44 books address social values, 23 books address self-concept, 14 books address family values, 8 books address illness/disease, 8 books address war, 10 books address friendship and death, and 1 book addresses disabilities, developing character, and illiteracy. Seventy-five percent of the bibliotherapy books from 1989-1999 address values and self-concept (Ouzts & Brown, 2000).

Similarly when ranking Children's Choices, of the 1155 choices, 198 are related to bibliotherapy; 39 books address relationships, 32 books address self-concept, 28 books address perseverance, 20 books address friendship, 19 books address family values, 18 books address social values, 11 books address death, and a new concern addressed in 1 book is gender stereotyping. Thirty-five percent of the 198 Children's Choices address values and self-concept while 65% address relationships and conflicts (Ouzts & Brown, 2000).

The rankings for Young Adults' Choices indicate that a total of 144 books are related to bibliotherapy; 37 books address death, 29 books address family problems, 15 books address teen pregnancy, 13 books address war, 11 books address self-concept, 9 books address alcohol abuse, and a new concern addressed in 1 book is torture. Slightly less than 10 percent of The Young Adults' Choices address self-concept, slightly more than 90% address personal problems and conflicts that individuals face. The annotated collections catalogued in the choices provide interventions that teachers, counselors, and parents can use to make the difference between an emotionally well-adjusted student and one who may develop at-risk tendencies (Ouzts & Brown, 2000).

Other resources for bibliotherapeutic literature are The Caldecott award-winning books and The Newbery award winners. Teachers must select reading material that matches the capabilities and abilities of their classroom populations. Because many students' achievement scores indicate their instructional reading levels are two-to-three years below their grade placement, teachers must find non-graded material to teach them and maintain the students' self-concepts. The Caldecott and Newbery winners are a feasible starting point for students to experience success and acquire the basic reading skills needed to build vocabulary and comprehension skills while addressing personal issues. Heterogeneously grouped classes expose students to students of their own age who have effective learning practices. The benefit of heterogeneous grouping for the classroom teacher is the diversity of capabilities that make it possible to appeal to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor strengths of his students. Profiling and labeling students very often retard their achievement.

Achievement has become a national priority particularly in the area of reading. Students' esteem and values have been linked to their ability to read and their ability to cope with their environment. When students have difficulty coping with daily issues, they have difficulty concentrating on educational tasks. This coupling of cognitive tasks with affective needs is becoming increasingly more useful in gauging achievement gains. Bibliotherapy validates that affective learning is important in influencing emotions, feelings, values, attitudes, predisposition, and morals. The personal issues that students face today did not exist 10 to 15 years ago, and there is a real need to show students that literature can help them resolve crises they face in constructive ways. In some instances, illiteracy contributes to personal conflict.

The annotated summaries of each choice and the thematic, cultural, and ethnic focus of Caldecott and Newbery winners give teachers access to titles for referring students for intervention without confronting. Teachers should realize that they are teachers—not therapists; the emphasis should be on developing understanding and empathy. The belief that students are not motivated is challenged once they are exposed to bibliotherapeutic literature; somehow the students connect to literature that addresses their needs. The universality of the problems that people face permeates all socioeconomic classes; therefore, implementation of a bibliotherapy model is cost effective and many of the titles are available in the school library or are available for purchase as trade books. Minimal professional development for using a bibliotherapeutic approach is required. Collaboration with the librarian will insure awareness of and sensitivity to literature that contains sexual abuse, strong language or sex. Teachers should be cautioned to match the literature to the group or individual to be instructed. The

key to successful presentation of bibliotherapeutic literature is to spend time with each title. These are not the types of books that can be superficially taught. Teachers must lay the groundwork for reading the text, focus on the issues that are addressed, target how the protagonist deals with conflict, and ultimately analyze the resolution. The resolution and the process selected for handling of the issue in context will serve as a model for the reader to apply to similar situations that anyone may encounter. Discussion is critical to building schemata for coping with adversity.

Teachers can use bibliotherapeutic literature to help students experience success in classrooms and transfer learning to their daily lives. Teachers must have a repertoire of strategies that are interesting to students. The five strategies that we will share today are not novel; they are techniques that many teachers use. The key is to use the strategies consistently until students develop proficiency.

Strategy #1: Vocabulary pullout - Teachers read the book prior to adding it to the class library; the object is to pull out vocabulary items and teach them before students read the book. For example, in Eve Bunting's Smoky Night, some words that may be pulled out are riot, appliance, distant, howling, hooligans, shelter, crumpled, cutter, cot, and amazed. By providing a context for these words and tying them to students' experiences, teachers help students add to their vocabulary and improve reading comprehension. By selecting the words that might present difficulty or context specific, the teacher is modeling practices that should occur when students read independently. When students attempt to read the book, they will have created prior knowledge based on the context and are thus able to read the book with fluency and with understanding.

Strategy #2: Double entry journals - Teachers select specific quotes from a literary work. Students divide their paper vertically and copy those quotations on the left side of the paper. On the right side of the paper the students explain the quotes in the context of their experiences. The point is to get students to vent their feelings and realize that others face adversity and that they can rise above or deal with rather than succumb to those adversities. The double entry journal provides a desktop for comparing and contrasting issues and for voicing their reactions. In A Chair for My Mother by Vera Williams, students responded to the quotes, "Right outside our house stood two big fire engines. I could see lots of smoke," and "My mother brought home little paper wrappers for the nickels and dimes and quarters. I counted them all out and wrapped them all up." Bibliotherapeutic literature shows students that they can vicariously experience what others experience without the negative consequences and have an avenue to express their personal feelings. For many of our students, expressing themselves in writing is a difficult task. If they can write in response to crises that others face, perhaps the double entry journal will deter them from acting without considering multiple alternatives.

Strategy #3: Sociograms- Teachers graphically show students how to figure out the conflicts that exist among people who share a connection by representing the dynamics of relationships in a web. On the stems that radiate from the central character(s), students write descriptors that characterize the relationships established. Sociograms help students see that social contexts can impact relationships. Betsy Byars' Pinballs points out that different characters' reactions to the Masons are justified based on their social context. Social, cultural, and ethnic contexts play an important role in defining relationships with others Also, sociograms establish diversity of ideas and

perspectives for all situations. Sociograms are excellent vehicles for developing character studies and for designing plots and structural elements in literary works. Students begin to understand the structure of literary works and the intricacies of resolving human relationships and interactions.

Strategy #4: Graphic organizers (Venn diagrams and character maps) - Teachers present overlapping circles that clearly differentiate contrast and comparison. Using the content of a story that is to be read, students select characters, literary works, and structural elements to express what is shared and what is distinctive. Students actually write in the circles to record their findings. This activity forces students to return to the text to extract explicitly stated, extrapolated, or inferred information for making judgments. What better way for students to resolve issues that confront them than to consider the facts, relate them to previous resolutions, and make decisions about how the current situation connects for resolving an internal conflict. Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting establishes a commonality between Andrew and Denny while maintaining their distinctions. The graphic organizer will make it easy for students to sit down and graphically represent how they are more alike others than how they are different. This has great possibilities for reducing the incidence of violence that plagues America's youth.

Strategy #5: Cause/effect relationships -Teachers list statements in columns beneath the headings of cause and effect. The teacher should read the sentences aloud to students in lower grades or have students in upper grades read them silently. Students should be directed to match each cause to the appropriate effect. By showing the connections in cause/effect relationships, students begin to change their behavior from

reactive to proactive. Bibliotherapy establishes a safe haven for students who deal with life and death situations daily.

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